

Helping communities prepare for possible railroad spills

MPCA's rail coordinator helps communities prepare for the possibility of oil spills and other environmental emergencies along rail lines.

Challenge

Oil spills from train derailments present serious risks to human health and the environment. MPCA's rail preparedness coordinator works with the five largest railroads operating in Minnesota to develop preparedness and response plans for rail emergencies. Coordinating with local emergency managers, fire officials, and railroads, this position helps to test the feasibility of each railroad's preparedness plan and assists with drills and training. The rail coordinator also has some compliance and enforcement responsibilities.



Proposal

This proposal ensures \$128,000 is in the Railroad and Pipeline Safety Account for the MPCA's rail preparedness coordinator. This position fulfills MPCA's statutory obligations under Minn. Stat. 115E, Oil and Hazardous Substance Discharge Preparedness. The previous funding source expired in 2017 and the Railroad and Pipeline Safety Account balance is no longer sufficient to maintain the position. This proposal is part of a larger budget proposal by the Departments of Public Safety and Transportation to reinstate the railroad and pipeline safety assessment to ensure funding is available for local and state government to address oil spills and other emergencies.

Why it's important

The Bakken oil field produces 1.2 million gallons per day. Nearly two-thirds of this production is shipped by rail through Minnesota. Fortunately, a catastrophic spill or derailment has not occurred in recent years. Nevertheless, ongoing preparation and monitoring are essential to protect human health and the environment. The statewide rail preparedness coordinator facilitates important collaboration between railroads and the communities where they operate.

For more information

Greta Gauthier

Assistant Commissioner for Legislative & Intergovernmental Relations
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

greta.gauthier@state.mn.us

Office: 651-757-2031 • Mobile: 651-338-8955